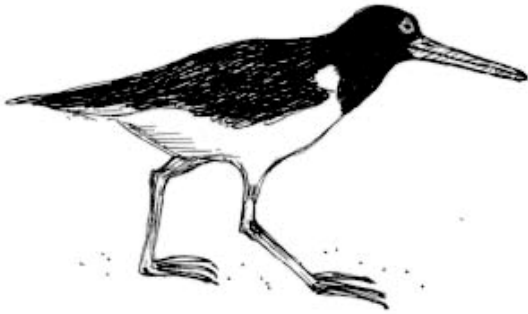

N.C. Plant and Animal Species Fact Sheets



Oyster catcher (*Haematopus palliatus*)

Introduction

Little is known about the movement, migration and population of the American Oystercatcher. They get their name from their habit of snatching oysters from oyster beds.

What do they look like?

It is hard to mistake this large heavy bodied shorebird with a large bright red bill. Their undersides are white, with a black head and back. Other distinguishing marks are the pink legs and orange ring around each eye. They are strong fliers as well as rapid runners and announce their arrival or departure with rapid cheeps.

How big are they?

They are one of the largest shorebirds growing to 16 inches (41cm) in length.

Where do they live?

They prefer isolated sandy beaches and coastal mudflat areas. They are usually found in small groups but not mingled with other shorebirds.

What do they eat?

Well their name says it all, they eat oysters by using their beaks as a chisel to open shell then they snip the adductor muscles which hold the bivalves shells closed so they can eat the inner oyster. They also will eat clams, sea urchins, crabs, snails, shrimp, and worms.

How do they mate?

They do not migrate to nest, they go to local isolated beaches and offshore islands to build a shallow nest on bare sandy areas behind frontal dunes. Their nests are often easy to miss.

What are the young like?

They usually have 1-3 gray eggs



with irregular dark markings. The young are born with their eyes open and develop very early and are able to move about in the nest and surrounding sand. They have been known to live up to 20 years

People Interactions

Since they prefer isolated areas, they do not usually come into contact with humans. As there are fewer isolated beaches their nesting habitat is being lost.

EstuaryLive

www.EstuaryLive.org

North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve

www.ncnerr.org or tel. 252.728.2170

Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program

<http://www.apnep.org/> or tel. 252.946.6481

Carolina Estuarine Reserve Foundation

www.cerf.us



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